

Halo Jarhead Chapter 7

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Summary: First Lieutenant Sykes trains Knight company while awaiting his CO's arrival on Reach. Sykes Devises the ultimate game for marines.

Halo Jarhead Chapter 7

****Chapter 7:****

Sykes walked into Col. Sable's office dressed in his field greens. He had been on his way to the barracks when the transmission came through asking him to report to Sable first. Sykes was thinking about the job that lay ahead for him, he was going to be in charge of training several rookies. Such a job was rarely easy nor was it normally pleasant.

Basic Training was useful for only a few things in Sykes' eyes; teaching them to salute, getting them in shape, and teaching them how to shoot and load a gun. The rest of the training had to be more hands on and done in such a fashion that could only be done by the company that the rookies had been assigned to. True in ODST basic it was much different, but in order to be ODST you had to have served in the regulars with great distinction or you had to be in the top 1.5% of the recruits. Sykes was the latter and it was something that made adapting to life in the regulars very difficult after the accident that disqualified him from continuing in the ODST's, things weren't as intense and initially it felt like he had been sidelined. Sure he had been jumped up to Master Sergeant skipping over the rank of Sergeant itself among others, but the reality was that he was too damn good and had too much experience to be a Corporal in the regulars.

Sykes walked up to the Sergeant who was sitting at the desk in front of the Colonel's office, he was an older man with a prosthetic arm and several scars on his face and remaining hand. His eyes were dark and showed the signs of a man who had seen the dogs of war and lived

to tell the story. Sykes felt for him, for that look in his eyes were mirrored in Sykes's eyes and such an image made them brothers with a bond that was nearly as strong as blood. "Lieutenant Sykes, reporting to see Colonel Sable."

"Yes Sir. The Colonel is waiting for you in his office." The Sergeant said with a voice that was broken of spirit nearly as much as his body was broken from war.

"Thank you Sergeant." Sykes said as he walked around the desk and into the Colonels office.

As Sykes entered he saw Sable standing up and gazing out the window watching the marines in his Battalion as they prepared for the fight that would test them not only as Marines but as humans. There was a fairly short man sitting in one of the two chairs in-front of the Colonels desk, the man was also in field greens and was sporting a bar on his neck that told Sykes exactly why he was here. This man was undoubtedly his companies new Second Lieutenant and his acting XO until Captain Wallace arrived to take command of the company. Sable and the Lieutenant turned to look at Sykes as he entered the room. Sykes immediately snapped to attention and saluted the newly promoted Colonel, and almost in unison the Second Lieutenant shot to his feet and mirrored Sykes salute and posture.

"At ease Lieutenant." Sable said as he lit the cigar he had in his hand.

"Thank you sir. And may I say congratulations on the promotion sir." Sykes said as he slackened his stance only slightly and realized that the young Second Lieutenant was still saluting him, Sykes quickly saluted him back and the young officer caught on that he could stand at ease.

"Thank you Lieutenant. Now I would like to introduce your companies new Second Lieutenant."

"Second Lieutenant Sotto Fujita, it's a pleasure sir." The young Japanese man said as he held out his hand to his new commanding officer.

Sykes grasped the man's hand and shook it with slight motion but with his iron tight grip. "First Lieutenant William Sykes, welcome to Knight Company Lieutenant." Sykes let loose of the man's hand and watched as he slung it around his back where it was then secured by the other. He was a man who had dreamt of being an officer and that was obvious in the way he carried himself and his lightning fast motions in times where it was neither normal nor necessary.

"I have news for both of you concerning your company." Sable said as he drew Sykes attention away from his new subordinate's appearance and onto a topic that he was very eager to learn more about. "Your rookies show up tomorrow at 1300 hours; you two are the acting commanding officers of Knight Company until Captain Wallace arrives in one month."

Sykes raised an eyebrow as he recalled his last conversation with the Colonel where he was told that it would be a number of months till the Captain would arrive. "That's sooner than originally estimated sir."

"Correct, it seems that they had left their destination sooner than we had anticipated. That should take some of the pressure off you then Will."

"Very good Sir, will there be anything else?" Sykes said as he thought about how the Captains arrival any time after this moment would not lessen the pressure in the least.

"Nope, you two are free to report to your Barracks and brief your men. Dismissed." The Colonel said as he rose from his seat and met the two men in a salute.

The two Lieutenants left the room and proceeded out of Battalion Command, Fujita grabbing his pack, which was just outside the Colonels office. Fujita was only about 5'5" which wasn't uncommon for someone of his nationality, his eyes were bright to spite their brown color, his posture was solid and strong, while his footfalls were quick and light. He was young and inexperienced, which normally would have annoyed and angered Sykes. However he was no longer the NCO who had to take orders from those who wore such undeserved bars, now he was a commanding officer himself and that being the case he might be able to mold this young officer into something that was more ideal than reality would normally allow.

"So what is your training plan for the men sir?" Fujita said as he struggled to keep up with Sykes as they walked out the front door.

"Well Lieutenant, the first thing that has to be done is we have to teach them how to be Marines. The basic training that they went through was meant for Army, Navy, and Marines alike. That is not good enough training for them, if we were to toss them into the field right now against the covenant, the company would be destroyed in a matter of moments."

"So what's the plan sir? PT? Squad training? Tactical awareness training?"

"All of those in their own time, but I will stick to PT as the first thing we will put them through. By putting them through a great deal of mental and physical strain we should be able to see exactly what they are made of." Sykes said as he climbed into the driver's seat of his warthog and Fujita climbed into the passenger seat. "Knight Company Barracks." Sykes said as the vehicle began to role forward. "So have you had any field experience?"

"No Sir, this is my first post."

"Well then, it's time to start learning. I'll tell you Sotto, I'm a former NCO and I have seen more green Lieutenants die on the field than I care to recall. However I have faith that you can learn enough in the time between now and your first mission to where you will survive it."

"Thank you sir."

"Don't thank me just yet Lieutenant; that means that I get to be your teacher and that means that you're going to learn the hard way."

The Pelican's roared as they touched down outside the Knight Company Barracks. Sykes stood at the center of the U shaped group that was formed by all the company vets who had seen action under his command. Billings, Cools, and Rhodes walked away from their positions in the formation and approached the five pelicans as their doors opened.

"Get your Asses moving rookies." Billings shouted over the sound of the engines as they quieted to a slight hum.

The fresh-faced marines ran out of the drop ships and lined up on the white line, which had been painted so that it closed the square started by the rest of the company. Each man rushed to the line and once they hit that mark they dropped their loose gear to the deck and stood at attention. Sykes waited for Billings and the other NCO's to retake their positions as he contemplated what to say. Sykes stepped forward and walked to the position in front of the group looking every man up and down before saying a thing. Half of them wouldn't dare lock eyes with him and the rest quivered as he strode past them.

"My name is First Lieutenant William H. Sykes, Acting Commander of the finest company in the corps. I'm proud to be the first to welcome you to the war and to my beloved Corp. All of you have just graduated from the generic basic training that is given to Army, Navy, and Marines alike. However that doesn't prove that you are marines, Marines are sent into enemy territory and ordered to take what the enemy has and kill anything that tries to stop us. All that you have proven thus far is that you can physically keep up with the flyboys and the watchdogs, but to be a marine you must be held to a higher standard. A standard which I will make damn sure that you either reach or will die trying to. This is a proud company, a company decorated with the blood of the covenant and the blood of the brothers we have lost." Sykes walked over to a wall that none of the rookies had paid any attention to, as they were too scared to take in the sights.

"This is the Honor wall, the wall where we have posted the pictures of every marine who has died from this company. Many would see such a thing as a haunting reminder, a scar on the face of our company. But not I. When I look at this wall I feel pride, pride for all which I knew who fought and died and now have their pictures on this wall. I feel pride for all who came before me who now hold residence on this wall. Look to your right, to your left, and then down at your boots. Out of the three people that you just laid eyes on, one won't make it through their first mission, two won't make it through their first Battle, and we will be damn lucky if one makes it through an actual campaign. I won't sugar coat it and I won't hide it. Being a marine is a damn hard thing to be, we break our backs so that the human race can keep on breathing. We are the heartbeat that pushes us forward and through the threat that the covenant presents. Now I close with asking all of you rookie's one very important question. Do you swear to give your lives in the name of Knight Company for the greater good of all humanity?"

The question hung in the air for a moment and in unison which seemed to be led by a red head at the center of the group they all looked at their commander and said. "Sir, Yes Sir."

"We will see. Sergeant Major Billings?"

The Sergeant Major quickly ran up next to Sykes and saluted.
"Sir?"

"Why don't you take the rookies and the vets for a run around hell."
Sykes said as he smirked.

"Yes sir." Billings said as he turned and looked at the rookies standing before him. "Alright Greenhorns drop your gear and fall in with the rest of the company, we are going for a run around Hell." The rookies dropped their duffels and quickly formed up in line with the rest of the company, but Sykes knew what they were wondering. They wanted to know what a run around hell was, and one thing was certain. They were going to hate it but learn to love it.

"Cools, your squad is with me." Sykes said as he approached the NCO.

"Yes sir." Cools said as he pointed to his sergeant and corporal who rounded up the squad and broke out of the column of marines.

"What's a run around Hell sir?" Second Lieutenant Fujita said as he walked up next to Lieutenant Sykes.

"Don't worry Lieutenant; you're going to find out." Sykes said as the company jogged out of the demonstration area.

Four hours later the company was jogging around Mt. Clements ten miles outside of the base. Sykes, Fujita, and Cools watched from up the mountain as the rookies kept pace with the rest of the company. Cools' squad walked forward sporting sniper rifles as they took aim.

"Is this the best idea Sir?" Fujita asked as he peered down at the company.

"Don't worry Lieutenant; none of them will receive any long term injuries." Sykes said as he lowered his spotting scope and turned to Cools. "Go for legs and arms on the rookies and kill shots on the vets."

"Yes sir." Cools said as he turned to his squad. "You heard the Lieutenant. On my command." The marines took up aggressive stances while they acquired their targets. Sykes locked eyes with Cools and gave him a nod. "Fire at will." Cools said.

Below the first round hit a rookie in the knee as the red TTR (Tactical Training Round) collided with his leg and formed into a solid that made the limb useless. He fell to the ground and screamed in pain as Toren a veteran who was just in front of him took a TTR to the chest and fell unconscious on top of the rookie. The Rookies broke formation and ducked for cover on instinct, but Billings just turned and cursed at them as twelve marines lay on the ground with TTR spatter all over them.

"Grab those who are down, and if you are hit but still able to move then get your Asses up and keep going."

The red headed rookie immediately jumped from cover and grabbed a fallen vet and slung the man over his shoulder and fell into line

behind the rest. The rest of the rookies did as he did as some of them limped their way after the rest of the company. A run around hell was more than what they were expecting.

"So that's the idea behind a run around hell?" Fujita asked as the group climbed back aboard the pelican that had brought them to the mountain.

"Not exactly, that's just the first little surprise, next we lay the TTR Mines and then we use dummy mortars. And that continues for two days." Sykes replied as he typed commands into his tablet.

"Two days? Sir we made them leave there gear at the Barracks. How will they survive?" Fujita asked.

"They run, scavenge, and hide. These are things that they don't teach in Boot, but they will learn it before I let them out into the war."

Fujita sat down in the pelican next to his commander who was busy selecting the next strike point. This was the dynamic training methods that could only be devised by an ODST.

Sykes stood outside of the spaceport with Fujita next to him as they waited for their official CO's arrival. They didn't know what to expect except that he was a major bad ass who was known for his strategic and tactical skills, but that was just the marine. None of the people that they had spoken to were able to tell them a thing about him as a man, and any who knew just smirked and kept on walking. This was unsettling for Sykes who preferred to know all he could about people so as to be able to predict their actions, and thereby make his to either complement or counter. The reality was that Wallace had been in the corps. just as long as Sykes had, and even though Sykes probably saw more action Wallace had a reputation with the higher ups. The one thing that made him feel better about his commander's arrival was that he would no longer have the job of commanding the company. Which was a task that had begun to weigh heavily on his shoulders and mental stability.

However there were some who made the whole thing worth it, those like Private Sean McBride. McBride stood out the first day that he showed up and that distinction had continued to be noticeable through the month that he and the rest of the rookies were put through the worst that Sykes could come up with. McBride was a leader and destined for great things, every member of the company could see that and it was something that they respected greatly. However Sykes saw something else in the young man, he saw a fire in his eyes and an untamed look about his face. That reminded him of himself years earlier, now his untamed face was scared and distinguished with the signs of war but his eyes remained a blazing fire that no amount of water could extinguish. The similarities between the two were uncanny as McBride demonstrated that he was the best shot amongst the rookies and a contender for the best in the company. His stealth tactics were solid and his intuition was finely tuned. Sykes had decided within the first week that among his list of people he wanted in his platoon he would have the young Private's name near the top.

A Pelican descended to the base as the two Lieutenants watched in the hopes that it was their commander. The pelican had been battered to the extreme as the Titanium-A armor on its starboard side looked as

though it had come in close contact with several high-powered plasma shots. When the drop ship landed the ramp made ear bursting screeches as it lowered, only showing that it had been through just as much if not more than what could be assumed by examining the paint. As the ramp lowered and touched the ground fifteen men could be seen inside the ship, and all of them ran out like kids running into a theme-park. Only two men walked at a slow pace one wore the bars of a Captain and the other of a Lieutenant. The Captain was tan and appeared to be nursing a plasma injury at the center of his right bicep. The Lieutenant was a tall black man who showed all the signs that he was the man that Sykes was looking for.

Sykes and Fujita both stepped forward and saluted as the two officers approached.

"Which one of you is Sykes?" The Lieutenant said in a British accent after he and the Captain saluted back at the two Lieutenants.

"That would be me sir." Sykes said as he stepped forward and looked eye to eye with the man.

"Well it's good to meet you Lieutenant. I am Captain Jeffery Wallace" And who might you be?" Wallace said as he looked at Fujita.

"Second Lieutenant Sotto Fujita, Sir." The young Lieutenant said as the stress that he was feeling could be seen in his eyes. It was a look that made Sykes see him as almost being a twig about to snap.

"Well it's a pleasure to meet you both, and let's get this out of the way now. Lieutenant Sykes?"

"Sir." Sykes said as he locked eyes with his new commander.

"You are relieved of command."

"Yes sir." Sykes replied as he breathed a bit easier knowing that he was no longer the commander.

"Best of luck Jeff. I'll see ya at the O-Club." The Captain said as he shook Wallace's hand and returned the complementary salutes of his departure.

"So then Sykes. What have you been putting my company through?" Wallace asked as he dropped his duffle for Fujita to carry.

"I've been putting them through a daily regiment of PT, team building, and tactical training. As well as some training tactics that I learned from my time in the ODSTs."

"Good, I'm anxious to see how they look. Since both of you are here I can safely assume that the company is on leave?"

"Yes sir. Their passes are up tomorrow morning at 0800."

"Very good. Well shall we go to the barracks then?"

The ride to the barracks was filled with questions and what those in the military would consider to be small talk. The Captain was a

knowledgeable fellow who had read every file on the senior members of the company as well as the files of the others who stood out. The small talk silenced however when the Lieutenant pulled up at the barracks and the Captain looked at his new home.

"Well I suppose this is just the same as the last barracks I lived in. Ya gotta love the UNSC for being consistent to the extreme." Wallace said as he climbed out of Sykes's Warthog.

"Yes sir. I don't recall ever living in one with different dimensions." Sykes said as he led the Captain into the building.

Fujita followed close behind carrying the Captain's duffle not saying a word the whole time. Many would misconstrue the Lieutenant's silence for anger but it was his nerves. The young Lieutenant was worried that he and Sykes wouldn't have done a satisfactory job in the eyes of the Captain, but that was Fujita's main fault. He was always worrying and second guessing himself. That was something that Sykes had made a note of when he observed the Lieutenant in training, he knew the real danger that this could cause. Second guessing one's self on the battlefield could get an officer killed or worse the company that he is leading.

"So do you have any other interesting training ideas Lieutenant?" Wallace said as they walked through the front door to find the place empty.

"Well there is one that I have been thinking about for a while sir, and I believe that the company is to the point where they should be able to survive it." Sykes said as he thought about the bold exercise that he had always wanted to perform.

"Well what did you have in mind?"

"Well sir. When I was an ODST, we used to say that not even a company of regulars was the equal to a platoon of ODSTs. Well sir given the fact that training these men in combat is difficult enough in house, why don't we test our abilities against the best."

"You want to put our boys up against a platoon of ODSTs?" Wallace said with a raised eyebrow.

"Actually two, sir."

"â€¦ I like it. What type of setup?" Wallace asked. The Captain seemed to be what Sykes had been hoping for as the man was open to ideas as well as respecting what was done before his arrival. As far as they could tell, he was the ideal commander.

Sykes walked into the ODST Company Barracks and approached the front desk. There was an old Sergeant sitting at the desk who immediately locked eyes with Sykes.

"Can I help you sir?" The old Sergeant said.

"Yes, I would like to see Captain Faison."

"Do you have an appointment?" The Sergeant asked almost so that he could piss off Sykes. Old Sergeants always seemed to take pleasure in

having power over their superiors, and Sykes could tell that was exactly what was happening here.

"No, I don't. However if you tell him that there is a Mr. Sykes here to see him, I'm certain that he will clear his schedule."

"Very good sir." The Sergeant said while displaying his annoyance with Sykes. He tapped his earpiece and began to speak at a low tone, he stopped speaking for a moment and nodded his head said a few other words then tapped the earpiece off. "Go right in sir. The office isâ€|"

"I'm well aware of the lay of this facility Sergeant. And for the record; I wasn't always a regular." Sykes said as he walked by the desk. He didn't care for the man acting in that fashion but he had to make it known that his rank didn't show everything about him.

Sykes walked quickly down the hallway and turned into the office as he locked eyes with a familiar face of an ODST who passed him by. The man was just a rookie back when Sykes was still hell jumping, but now his eyes looked like that of a well-seasoned veteran. Sykes knocked on the door and heard Faison's voice say, "Come".

Sykes entered the room and saluted. In the room stood a Lieutenant who was behind the desk to Faison's right and Faison was sitting at his desk going over his paperwork. "So Gunny, what brings youâ€|" Faison said as he looked up and saw the Lieutenant's bars on Sykes neck. "Well now, they must be getting pretty desperate down in the regulars if they are promoting you to a commissioned position. At ease." Faison stood and walked over to Sykes and held out his hand.

"Tell me about it. Now I know why you spent so much time in your office, the job is a pain in the ass." Sykes said as he grasped the Captains hand and shook it.

"Oh, this is First Lieutenant Silva, Raptor Company XO." Faison said as he turned and offered Sykes a seat and pointed to the man who was standing behind the desk. "Lieutenant, this is one of the best ODSTs I have ever had the pleasure of serving with. He can shoot a flee at two clicks with only two times magnification."

"Now you sound just as bad as Buck." Sykes said as he held out his hand to the Lieutenant who grasped it and shook.

"Yeah well it might be a slight exaggeration but not by much. So what brings you to my door step?" Faison said as he settled back into his seat.

"I'm here to challenge you."

"Challenge me?" Faison said as he raised an eyebrow.

"My company commander and I would like to invite two of your best platoons to a training exercise."

"And what's the game?" Silva said stepping out of his place slightly but not in a manner that angered Faison.

"VIP Extraction, TTR Match."

"And we would be extracting?" Faison said as he raised an eyebrow.

"You're not scared, are you sir?" Sykes said as he formed a smirk.

"Only for your company Lieutenant, are you sure you don't want to call in your whole battalion for this?" Faison said as he sat back in his chair.

"Oh don't worry sir. I'm sure that we can handle two platoons."

"Well I'll think about it."

"Alright sir. And while you do May I askâ€¦ Where is Buck?"

Faison drove the warthog up to the training base where several ODSTs were entrenched and watching as a pelican plummeted from high orbit. Faison, Sykes, and Silva climbed out of the vehicle and walked up to the front line. "That's bucks squad just about to touch down." Faison said as the drop ship stopped before hitting the ground and the ODSTs dropped to the ground.

"They think they are out of range don't they?" Sykes said as he smirked.

"They are Lieutenant." Silva said as he looked at Sykes.

"Captain I'll make a deal with you, if I can take out Buck's squad from here with a sniper rifle. You say yes to my challenge. If not then drinks are on me for the entire ODST Company tonight." Sykes said as he looked at the grinning ODST commander.

"You're on." Faison said as he pulled up his field glasses.

"Specialist your weapon." Sykes said to the sniper who was standing next to him.

"Yes sir." The man said as he detached the strap from his chest and offered the rifle to the Lieutenant.

Sykes took the weapon and approached the Titanium-A wall that stood as the main defensive structure of the building. He folded down the bi-pod legs and took up firing position; he zoomed in to 10x and acquired his first target, which was the person at the back of the line of ODSTs. He squeezed the trigger and watched as the ODST dropped, he quickly locked onto the leader and took that one down just as easily, he fired three more shots and watched as the squad lay paralyzed from the TTR rounds that had collided with their abdominals. Sykes emptied the rifle and returned it to the specialist who he could only imagine was staring at him in disbelief of what he had just seen. Sykes walked back over to Faison and Silva with a smirk on his face. "So does next week work for you?"

"Didn't I tell you he was good?" Faison said as he looked at Silva who had an odd look on his face of sheer disbelief. "Yes I suppose it will do just fine."

"Now, do you mind if I go and give Buck a wakeup call?" Sykes said as he grabbed the deactivator from the med-kit.

"Not at all, in fact I think I want to see how he reacts to finding out it was you."

Sykes climbed out of the warthog and walked over to the ODST that was leading the group. He threw the helmet open and looked at the face of Buck who was lying there asleep from the anesthetic that had knocked him out cold as soon as it hit his pores. Sykes ran the TTR Deactivator wand over Bucks chest and the TTR's hardened texture deteriorated into a red pool on his chest. Sykes tapped Bucks forehead until his eyes opened looking very drowsy.

"Will?" Buck asked as he struggled to move.

"Yeah and you thought you were out of range. Haven't we had this discussion before?" Sykes said as he smiled at his old friend and offered him a hand up.

"Yeah well not that many snipers can do that so it's not surprising that I wasn't expecting you to show up and knock my whole squad out." Buck said countering Sykes's statement.

"Well you're in for more of it when my company kicks your ass next week." Sykes said as he smiled. Being back around ODSTs made him feel like he was home, and seeing Buck and Faison was like seeing his brothers. If he had any family left other than his uncle, they were it.

Sykes opened the door to his house to find Natalie drinking a glass of whisky while typing away on a tablet. She glanced up with surprise as the marine who had been gone for so many weeks returned. Natalie stood and walked over to the bar and poured him a drink and gave it to him as he approached her. Sykes took the glass and set it on the bar as he grabbed the woman and pulled her in close and kissed her, she was still there and that was something that he found more refreshing than any beverage could ever be. The whole time that he was training the company he had found himself thinking about her randomly, it was at first a mystery to him but now that he was seeing her before him once again he was able to understand why.

Natalie discarded her tablet and drink onto the bar as she and Sykes embraced, the house was lonely without him there with her, but now it was worth the wait for her.

Captain Wallace walked up to Sykes's home. In his hand he carried a bottle of whiskey and a data pad under his arm. He hit the doorbell and was shocked to find a woman answer the door. Wallace had read all of the personnel reports that he could manage in the short amount of time he had available, and he had examined none closer than that of the former NCO whose home he stood at the threshold of. That was the exact reason why he was so shocked; the file had not only said that Sykes wasn't married but that he hadn't had a serious relationship in nearly three years. This wasn't that strange though, he had just recently watched the majority of his company get demolished before his eyes, that's enough to make anyone reevaluate their life. "Hello ma'am, I am Captain Jeffery Wallace. I'm here to see Lieutenant Sykes." Wallace said as he formed an easy smile.

"Oh you're here to see Will; okay he is in the study. Follow me." Natalie said as she opened the door up further so Wallace could enter.

Wallace entered the home and followed Natalie as she walked through the rooms leading him to his XO.

Sykes had been going over the tactical layout ever since Captain Wallace had sent it to him. He had held worse positions, but that was to be understood since he had fought both the insurrectionists and the covenant, and they tended to affect the fortifications. But training fortifications were nice due to the fact that no live rounds were used in them. TF-23B was their Fort and the ODST's had TF-23A, which was located exactly 2 clicks' north east of their base. The parameters were clear. Knight Company would defend the VIP, which would be played by Colonel Sable who volunteered for the job. The ODST's would attempt to break through the defenses and secure the VIP, then once they secure the VIP they had to flee TF-23B and make their way back to TF-23A. Once they were inside their own barracks with the VIP they would win. All Sykes had to do was make sure that they never get the Colonel back to TF-23A and they would win, all he had to do was defend against what he would do because his tactics resembled Faison's so well that it was nearly an even match between the two. Wallace knew that Sykes was important to forming his strategy and that's why he had sent this Intel to him. The most valuable thing to know when making a battle plan is what your enemy will do, and Sykes was a marine who still thought as an ODST did.

Just as he reached for his cigar box the study doors opened and Natalie lead Captain Wallace in. Sykes immediately shot up to his feet. "Sir, welcome." He said as he cleared a seat and offered it to his CO. "Oh, and this is Doctor Natalie Lang." Sykes said as he indicated to the woman who had lead Wallace to Sykes.

"Lang? The woman you rescued from Oasis?" Wallace said as he raised an eyebrow.

"Yes Captain." Natalie said as she smirked.

"Well then I guess the hero does get the girl." Wallace said as he handed the bottle to Sykes. "It's a pleasure ma'am." Wallace said as he shook her hand. "Now Lieutenant, what is your tactical evaluation?"

"Well sir." Sykes said as he grabbed two glasses from a drawer in his desk. "I can see where they will most likely attack, and where it is that they will most likely extract the VIP from. However I have not been made aware of the other items that the facility is equipped with."

"I will leave you two to your war games." Natalie said as she walked out of the room.

Sykes then plugged his tablet into the holographic projector and a large version of the map appeared in front of him. He then grabbed his cigar box and offered one to his commander who accepted the iconic cigar, which was smoked by almost every man who dared call himself a marine. The two men lit their cigars and took a long drag

before continuing the conversation. Sykes quickly poured the whiskey into the glasses as the captain treated his cigar as though it were a commodity that he had been denied for months.

"Well Lieutenant, we have a total of six gun emplacements. Two here at the entrance, one at each flank, and two guarding the barracks. We also have three warthogs, which are equipped with turrets. Our standard weapons set will be what the company is equipped with."

"And what about training explosives?" Sykes said as he handed the glass of whiskey to Wallace.

"Each team has twenty training mines, and each soldier will have two TTR training grenades with an emergency stockpile in the barracks." Wallace said as he took a drink of the whiskey.

"Okay sir, now what is your plan for the defensive layout?"

"Well I want Fujita on the flanks, and I want the entrance."

"Very well sir. Then if I might, I would like to lead my platoon into the bush as a scouting and Intel team."

"Why do I have a feeling that you will be doing more than scouting and collecting Intel?" Wallace said as he took a drag from his cigar.

"Because you are getting to know me better sir." Sykes said as he smirked and took a drink of the whiskey. "Now sir, what are your thoughts on the way that I have had the company split into platoons?"

"Well not a bad setup, I see that you have Sergeant Major Billings with Fujita. A little worried about the rookie are we?"

"Well he has never seen combat sir. And our company doesn't tend to keep our Second Lieutenants very long."

"True. I also see that you have put the rookie McBride high on the list for the people that you want in your platoon." Wallace said as he raised an eyebrow.

"He shows promise sir, and I think he will make a fine NCO someday."

"Well the platoons look just fine, and the vets seem to be leading the rookies around with little issue. I think that we are as ready for this as we can be."

Sykes agreed with the Captain who was showing that he had a grounded head and an eye for detail. The only thing that Sykes had to worry about was who was going to strike first.

End
file.